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ABSTRACT

Developments in the assessment movement are summarized, with educational guesses made about the impact these developments could have at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD). Information is presented as follows: national concerns; national and federal developments; western regional developments: assessment and accreditation; developments at the state level; master plan review; supplementary budget language; Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR) 141; Assembly Bill (AB) 2016; assessment and the University of California; assessment at UCSD; and summary and recommendations. Some of the facts are: upward of 20 states have mandated assessment programs for their public higher education systems; California's legislators and policymakers are cautiously beginning to pay more attention to assessment; and currently, UCSD neither requires the systematic peer review of faculty classroom performance nor engages in value-added assessment. Conclusions and recommendations include: insofar as it improves its assessment infrastructure, UCSD would benefit even if the state ultimately decided to forgo insisting on more extensive assessment; UCSD may wish to wait and see what happens or consider discussing how to make more systematic use of the information it already collects about outcomes and instructor performance; and it is likely the state will mandate outcomes assessment, and it may eventually require that evaluation of instruction play a larger role in hiring and promotion. Contains 27 references. (SM)

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HERE COME THE JUDGES
The Assessment Movement and Its Potential Impact on UCSD

Michael Evans-Layng

March 1989

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....i

Introduction.....1

National Concerns.....1

National and Federal Developments.....4

Western Regional Developments: Assessment and Accreditation.....6

Developments at the State Level.....9

Master Plan Review.....12

Supplementary Budget Language.....13

Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR) 141.....15

Assembly Bill (AB) 2016.....17

Assessment and the University of California.....20

Assessment at UCSD.....21

Summary and Recommendations.....23

References.....26

Distribution List.....28

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National Developments

- Over the last decade, interest has grown in expanding the scope of assessment in higher education, and the movement shows no signs of abating.
  - Concerns about economic competitiveness underlie much of this interest.
  - Many are consequently expressing concerns about the costs, quality, efficiency, and results of higher education.
- A national survey (Yankelovich, 1988) showed that a majority of opinion leaders have deep doubts about the linkage between research and undergraduate education.
- Upwards of twenty states have mandated assessment programs for their public higher education systems.

Typology of Assessment

- There is no consensus on what constitutes "assessment." Discussions in the literature variously include:
  - Program and instructor evaluation,
  - Evaluating competency (e.g. "Rising Junior" basic skills exams),
  - Outcomes assessment (ascertaining the results of exposure to a program and/or institution), and
  - Value-added or Talent Development assessment (ascertaining the actual impact of a program and/or institution controlling for student and institutional characteristics at entry).
- Value-added assessment and evaluating classroom instruction are the most controversial because of expense and methodological problems.
  - Instructor evaluation has a much longer history than Value-added assessment and is closer to widespread establishment.

Regional Developments: Accreditation

- The United States Department of Education has called for regional accrediting bodies to require more systematic assessment of their member institutions.
- The Western Association of Schools and Colleges has adopted a new standard that mandates a wide range of assessment practices.

California and the UC System

- California's legislators and policymakers are cautiously beginning to pay more attention to assessment.

- The California Postsecondary Education Commission and the state Legislature are seeking to increase the role of assessment in the stewardship of public higher education.

- The UC system is most likely to feel the effects of state interest in assessment in two areas: 1) measuring outcomes, 2) more extensive screening and placement testing.

  - Because of its selectivity and experience with Subject A, these two kinds of assessment should reflect well on the university.

- The "Smelser Report's" evaluation of undergraduate lower division education as a somewhat "neglected child" in UC has highlighted instructor evaluation as a target for action.

- California is now cautiously developing a performance-based supplemental funding system that would use value-added assessment as one basis for determining allocations.

- Unlike research universities in other states, the UC system is participating in the assessment movement, although it is not seeking to lead it.

UCSD

- UCSD is involved in the assessment movement at the state and local level, and the campus already assesses outcomes, and has an extensive pretesting program.

- Currently, UCSD neither requires the systematic peer review of faculty classroom performance nor engages in value-added assessment.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Experience at other institutions shows that useful assessment efforts require strong internal advocacy, a deep appreciation for the university's unique mission and history, and intimate faculty involvement during all phases of development and implementation.

- It is likely that the state will mandate outcomes assessment, and it may eventually require that evaluation of instruction play a larger and more identifiable role in the hiring and promotion process.

- UCSD may wish to wait and see what happens or consider discussing how to make more systematic use of the information it already collects about outcomes and instructor performance.

- Insofar as it improves its "assessment infrastructure," the campus would benefit even if the state ultimately decided to forego insisting on more extensive assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is "in the air," and is likely to remain part of the atmosphere of higher education for some time. Despite the fact that assessing the potential and performance of students, faculty, and institutions has been an integral part of higher education in North America since Harvard opened over 350 years ago, interest in the topic appears broader and deeper than ever before. Broader, in that the issue has become intertwined with national and international political, economic, and social concerns. Deeper, in that the technology of testing has evolved to the point where some educators and psychometricians argue that it is now possible to reliably measure many consequences of education previously considered intangible.

The purposes of this paper are to summarize developments for interested parties and to make some educated guesses about the impact these developments could have at UCSD. The study begins with an overview from a national perspective of the nature and scope of the so-called "assessment movement." The paper then surveys regional and state responses to the movement, looks closely at developments in California, and describes the current state of assessment at UCSD. The report concludes with a brief discussion of possible responses to the assessment movement that the campus may wish to consider.

NATIONAL CONCERNS

Competitiveness

Recently, economic concerns have provided perhaps most of the impetus behind the push for assessment. The movement away from heavy industry towards high technology and information management, and the increasing competitiveness of Europe and Japan in these areas, is

moving many to call for a more educated populace in general, and especially for more scientists and engineers. The National Science Foundation, in its report The Role of Science and Technology in Economic Competitiveness (1987), asserted the connection between education and national competitiveness in the strongest possible terms. Similarly, UCSD's Chancellor Atkinson wrote in the March 2, 1988, issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education that, "The results of university research cannot be used productively by American industries in the absence of a technologically literate work force." Given the concern for enhancing competitiveness, reducing the trade imbalance, and balancing the budget it seems only natural that policymakers and consumers alike would increasingly emphasize making institutions of higher learning more accountable for the efficient use of resources--especially public resources--to train the kinds of workers the country needs; and accountability involves assessment.

Societal Cohesion

In addition to the issue of economic competitiveness, scholarly and popular writers are expressing concerns about our society's continued ability to function as a society. The ideal of America as a great "melting pot," where differences among people give way to a diffuse homogeneity, is itself giving way to a vision of America as a centrifuge, where cultural differences are heightened and stratified. Habits of the Heart, by Robert Bellah and others (1985), while rejecting the simplistic ideal of the melting pot, nonetheless concluded that radical individualism is indeed undermining commitment to community to a disturbing degree. Others, notably ex-Secretary of Education William Bennett, have worried publicly about the fragmentation of American and western culture. The problematical and

controversial solutions to the problem of a less integrated society now receiving widespread attention--such as laws declaring English the official language and proposals to mandate national service in exchange for student financial aid--signify the depth of many peoples' concern.

Technology of Testing

According to the New York Times supplement Education Life, testing has never been more widespread or consequential in our society, and is likely to become more so (April 10, 1988). With the advent of relatively inexpensive and powerful computers, all aspects of education--whether research, instruction, or evaluation--are undergoing great changes. And, even though paper and pencil tests still predominate, the application of computer technology to the development and administration of tests is beginning to change both the format and content of instruments. The advent of interactive tests involving audio-visual media (e.g. portions of the ACT COMP) is only one example of the new era in evaluation.

But not everyone is equally sanguine about the ability of psychometricians to measure the effects of education as well as some of them say they can. The absence of consensus is, by itself, evidence that we still await the day of widely accepted approaches to assessment that yield comparable information across different institutions with different missions and different programs. Despite advances in testing, many still agree with Ernest Boyer, writing in College (1987), that higher education should resist state-imposed outcome measures because "Such efforts often measure that which matters least and fail to consider the most essential traditions of higher education." Or, more poetically, many educators echo Anthony's reply

to Cleopatra's demand that he tell her "how much" he loved her: "There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned."

NATIONAL AND FEDERAL DEVELOPMENTS

The economic and social concerns mentioned above have given rise to a variegated national assessment movement that is gathering momentum. The publication in recent years of a number of national reports critical of American education in general, and higher education in particular, have encouraged this movement. The National Governor's Association and the Education Commission of the States have also come out strongly in favor of increased assessment.

Typology of Assessment

All of the national reports have placed strong emphasis on assessment, and one can detect several different strands of assessment weaving through them. These include using the results of institutional assessment to guide decisions about resource allocation, to improve student advising and classroom instruction, and to provide students with feedback during the learning process (educators generally differentiate between this use and using assessment for grading and ranking purposes). One also encounters the terms "outcomes assessment," which generally means measuring the results of going through a particular program or college, and "value-added assessment," which refers to measuring the actual impact of a particular program of college after taking into account the characteristics and abilities of the students at entry (some educators prefer to use the term "talent development" rather than borrowing the more impersonal term "value-added" from economics). Institutions or systems can assess outcomes by using cross-sectional sampling ("one-shot" studies), while

value-added assessment requires more costly and time consuming pre- and post-testing ("longitudinal" studies).

Despite general agreement on the need for improving the quality of education, the assessment "movement" manifests no real consensus regarding specific goals, nomenclature, or techniques, and, consequently, no real unity of effort or direction. As usually happens when a topic becomes popular, the ever-wider discussion of assessment is serving more to confuse than clarify the meaning of the word. There is both danger and opportunity for higher education in this confusion, especially as federal and state officials begin to generate and implement policies based upon their own understandings of the purposes and means of assessing higher education. In College (1987), Ernest Boyer worries that, in "the current climate, there is great danger that politicians, not educators, will shape the process as funding formulas are linked to narrow yardsticks of assessment." Because the meanings that policymakers and legislators associate with assessment will directly influence the formulation of policy, law, and the allocation of resources, the UC system is already working to define assessment to its advantage as it negotiates with the state about the effectiveness of undergraduate education.

Department of Education

Widespread confusion and ambiguity notwithstanding, near the end of the Reagan Administration, the Secretary of Education called for a reexamination of the standards the Department of Education uses for recognizing the authority of accrediting agencies (Federal Register, 9-8-87). In order to "help ensure that Federal money devoted to education is spent wisely," Secretary Bennett proposed, among other things, that accrediting agencies place "greater emphasis upon the

consistent assessment of documentable student achievements as a principal element in the accrediting process." Since federal student aid funds are available only to students attending accredited institutions, this requirement would place increased pressure upon institutions to engage in more thorough assessment.

Bennett's request for comments on his proposal provoked a mixed response. While some applauded the effort to tighten up the accreditation process, many educators are worried that the Secretary overstepped his legal authority by attempting to indirectly dictate policy to postsecondary institutions by exerting more direct control over accreditation. Not surprisingly, the Department of Education has denied this interpretation of the Secretary's intent, countering that his proposal specified neither particular programs as worthy of accreditation, nor the kind of assessment instruments and procedures that accrediting agencies should require their current and prospective members to use. Rather, the department maintains that, because of his fiduciary responsibilities to taxpayers, the Secretary was merely seeking to require accrediting agencies to in turn require institutions within their purview to systematically gather information regarding institutional effectiveness.

WESTERN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS: ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION

On the regional level, accrediting agencies have tended to give the Bennett proposal their qualified endorsement. Given the historic emphasis that such agencies have placed on independence, even a reluctant embrace may appear somewhat surprising. However, the agencies' tentative support of the Secretary's desire for more "consistent" and "documentable" evidence of student achievement becomes

more understandable when one considers that enforcing such a requirement would probably enhance rather than diminish the regional presence and authority of the regional accrediting agencies. In the West, for example, the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) recently adopted a new standard regarding "Institutional Effectiveness." The standard mandates institutional research for its membership, and lists a number of procedures and measures that institutions <u>may</u> use:

1) changes in students' academic achievement,
2) peer review of educational programs,
3) structured interviews with students and graduates,
4) changes in students' values as measured by standard instruments of self-reported behavior patterns,
5) pre- and post-testing of students,
6) surveys of recent graduates,
7) surveys of employers of graduates,
8) student scores on standardized examinations or locally constructed examinations,
9) performance of graduates of professional programs on licensure examinations, or
10) the placement of graduates of occupational programs in positions related to their fields of preparation.

Of the above, the only measures that UCSD does not currently use on a regular basis are 1 (changes in academic achievement), 5 (pre- and post-testing), and 7 (employer surveys). In all, the amount and variety of assessment that UCSD already conducts clearly accords with the spirit of the new standard. Nonetheless, if WASC continues along

its present path, it will probably exert pressure in the future to engage in more direct assessment of the impact of the university's environment and programs (see 1 & 5, above). As the next section shows, the state is also showing a tentative interest in value-added approaches to assessing institutional effectiveness.

In discussing assessment and the new standard in his 1986-87 annual report, WASC's Executive Director Kay Andersen, wrote that accreditors will henceforth "expect institutions to provide better evidence in their accreditation self-study reports for the many assertions of quality and institutional strength." Moreover, Andersen expressed the hope that the new WASC standard could help establish "a more direct and accurate profile of institutional productivity...." and eventually enable accreditation to be done "at more frequent intervals" without requiring institutions to undergo the "time consuming, and sometimes repetitive" process of self-study. Even with the flexibility WASC has built into its new standard, it seems unlikely that most member institutions--particularly research universities--will show much enthusiasm for increased assessment.

Andersen has expressed some reservations about the move toward a greater emphasis on using quantitative instruments for assessment, noting that policymakers and legislators are consequently moving the discussion of assessment increasingly away from institutional improvement towards institutional accountability. In a major article in Change magazine in early 1987, Peter Ewell also noted disapprovingly the change in the "symbolism" of assessment from "instructional improvement to institutional accountability."

Because planning for improvement necessarily involves evaluating past performance, one may ask how calling institutions to account could

pose a threat to higher education? The dangers lie not in the call for accountability itself, but in stressing accountability over improvement, thereby miring the discussion of institutional effectiveness in comparative judgments about the past (who did better or worse than whom?), rather than stimulating positive planning for the future (how can college x improve relative to itself?). And even where policymakers keep accountability in its proper place as only a by-product of the process of institutional improvement, the combination of crude instruments with relatively uninformed opinion still has the potential to undermine institutional autonomy. With this loss of independence could go increased time, effort, and expense to justify one's share of the resources, without any guarantee that resources would increase to compensate for the cost of the assessment process itself. These dangers are emerging primarily at the state level, where most resource allocation decisions are made.

DEVELOPMENTS AT THE STATE LEVEL

The Tennessee Experience

As of the end of 1988, upwards of twenty states had mandated some kind of statewide assessment in higher education through policy or statute (all fifty states currently have extensive assessment mechanisms in place for their K-12 systems). Tennessee and Florida were among the first to establish performance-based funding processes. Since Tennessee was the first to apply academic performance criteria to funding state colleges and universities, its experience has received the most attention and is the most well-documented.

In 1979 the Tennessee Higher Education Commission instituted a budgeting process that linked the augmentation of the enrollment-driven

base budget to an institution's educational effectiveness. By 1983, the commission had elaborated the system to the point where it affected almost all academic programs and offered institutions the potential to increase their instructional budgets by up to 5%. Institutions must demonstrate their effectiveness in an annual report that measures quality against five standards:

1) The percentage of programs eligible for accreditation that are accredited.

2) The percentage of programs that have undergone a peer review, administered a comprehensive examination to majors within a five-year period, or both (an institution earns maximum credit if student performance on the field exams improves over time, or if it exceeds that of students in similar programs at comparable institutions).

3) The "value added" by the general education component of the curriculum, as measured by the American College Testing College Outcome Measures Project (ACT COMP) exam (an institution earns maximum credit if the mean gain in scores between the Freshman pretest and the Senior posttest exceeds that calculated for a group of comparable institutions)

4) Opinion about the quality of academic programs and services, as measured by surveys of students, alumni, employers, or community members.

5) Implementation of a campuswide plan for instructional improvement based on information gleaned from the process of documenting an institution's effectiveness as measured by the other four standards, as well as other sources of insight.

Because of the financial incentive, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, moved aggressively to expand and deepen its assessment program. As a result, the institution received augmentations of $1.2 million in 1982, $2.9 million in 1983, and $3.5 million in 1984--the maximum amounts the campus was eligible for each year. Most other state campuses have followed Knoxville's lead and are now earning the maximum augmentation, or close to it. Despite the description of the

allocations as "augmentations," opinion in Tennessee is divided about whether these funds represent new money, or money that the state would have allocated according to existing formulas anyway. The perception among some educators is that, contrary to assurances, performance-based funding may have affected base budgets after all.

Although the prospect of increased funding spurred its effort, Knoxville has reported that the assessment process has in fact had a substantial impact on the quality of education it offers. Part of the credit for this result goes to the state's requirement for a campus to demonstrate what it is actually doing with all of the information it is gathering. This provision forced Knoxville to include the faculty at every turn of designing and implementing the assessment process, as well as widely disseminating the results for faculty use. Knoxville also cited the strong, active support of the university's highest levels of leadership as a major influence on how seriously the campus approached the assessment effort itself, and how systematically it used the information the effort yielded. A study of the use of outcomes measures in the Western regional accreditation process (Armstrong, 1987) reached a similar conclusion about the importance of "strong internal advocacy" to pedagogically useful assessment.

In the opinion of university staff, had the annual report been only an administrative function it would never have gotten beyond merely fulfilling another reporting requirement and would have had little or no impact on the actual quality of the institution. Reports from Knoxville have stressed that consistent faculty involvement and strong presidential leadership were indispensable in keeping the focus of assessment as much as possible on institutional improvement without

slighting the issues of institutional accountability and acquiring additional resources.

Developments in California

In California the assessment movement is advancing simultaneously on several policy and legislative fronts. One involves the translation into law of the recommendations of the recently completed review of the Master Plan for Higher Education in California (1987). The budget process is another locus for assessment-related activity. Additionally, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) is responding directly to current law in developing a performance-based funding scheme to encourage excellence.

Master Plan Review

In addition to its concerns about a core curriculum, the transfer function, and retention--the monitoring of which all require different kinds of assessment--the Commission for the Review of the Master Plan also included several other assessment-related recommendations in its final report.

Recommendation #:

14) The segmental governing boards must affirm that the oversight of teaching quality is as important a governance issue as their other management and administrative responsibilities. They must require regular reports from the campuses and the systemwide chief executive officers as to the state and quality of undergraduate instruction for each campus and for the segment as a whole. Such reports should have specific performance measures that make it possible to determine the quality of instruction in each of the colleges and universities.

    ...The Regents of the University of California shall by policy declare and ensure that teaching is in fact of equal weight to research in retention, promotion, and tenure....

15) The Governing boards shall ensure that all faculty and teaching assistants have the necessary instructional skills prior to entering a classroom. They shall provide incentives for

teaching excellence not only through the retention, promotion, and tenure process but by other appropriate mechanisms as well. Direct faculty interaction with students through advising and other out-of-classroom contact are integral parts of the teaching function and should be encouraged and rewarded accordingly.

21) The Regents of the University of California...shall maintain consistent policies for rigorous and systematic review of the quality of graduate programs....

23) ...the regional accrediting commissions take sufficient cognizance of student "outcomes" in evaluating institutions-holding colleges and universities accountable for clear expectations for student learning and appropriate assessment programs to determine whether the expectations are being met...

A legislative committee is now considering these recommendations with an eye towards generating legislation.

Supplementary Budget Language

The 1987 Budget Act contained Supplemental Language calling for the UC system to submit a report to the educational policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature "explaining progress made toward adoption and implementation of comprehensive outcomes assessment mechanisms." The Legislature initiated this information-gathering effort in support of its ultimate intention to develop and adopt processes for assessing student learning, program effectiveness, and how well institutions accomplish their missions expressly for the purpose of "more effectively reviewing educational budget expenditures." The supplemental language specifies that the UC report include an evaluation of how well the university is doing in putting into effect the recommendations in the June 1986 Task Force Report on Lower Division Education (the "Smelser Report"), several of which, like the review of the Master Plan, dealt with the evaluation of instruction and the

training of TAs. Clearly, then, at this time the Legislature is not inclined to limit assessment to the measurement of the outcomes of the university experience.

Major research universities, both public and private, have generally expressed little enthusiasm for systematic assessment of the quality of instruction. At UCSD, for example, as of the last accreditation Self-Study (April, 1986), the faculty argued that "teaching performance is generally of a very high order..." at the campus and that the situation then did not warrant the "institution of a standardized, campus-wide peer review system to evaluate teaching." However, the deeply held conviction exists among many voters and legislators that undergraduate instruction should have an equal or greater priority than original research. For example, a recent survey of more than 235 American opinion leaders (Yankelovich, 1988), showed a majority of representatives from government, business, and the media, in agreement that tenure decisions depended too much on research and not enough on teaching. Likewise, a majority of respondents agreed that pressure on faculty to conduct original research actually had a negative effect on the quality of undergraduate teaching. Thus, it is conceivable that the state could yet require the evaluation of instruction--probably beginning with temporary rather than ladder-rank faculty. Given the well-established primacy of the university's research mission, it is difficult to see how the state could dramatically elevate the importance of undergraduate instruction among ladder-rank faculty without fundamentally changing the nature of the institution itself.

Rather than instituting the evaluation of classroom performance, starting systematic outcomes assessment, as mentioned in the budget

language, would be easier and much less controversial. Research shows that student persistence and post-graduate performance is largely a function of pre-collegiate ability, preparation, and other characteristics. As Alexander Astin (1975) has stated, "...institutions vary widely in their actual dropout rates, and much of this variation can be attributed to the characteristics of their students at the time of college entry." Combined with the fact that outcomes assessment usually does not take students' entering characteristics into account, the UC system's selectivity makes such assessment a strong suit indeed. After all, even accepting the view that undergraduate education in UC is, in the words of the Smelser Report, something of a "neglected child," most UC alumni still tend to do well professionally and to feel positively about their university experience. Moreover, most UC campuses are already monitoring some outcomes on a regular and systematic basis, precisely because such studies reflect so well on the university.

Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR) 141

In response to ACR 141 (1986-Hayden) the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) published a short report in March 1987 entitled Funding Excellence in California Higher Education. Before discussing the report, a brief look at some of the assumptions underlying ACR 141 will shed some light on the understandings that are informing current legislative activity. These assumptions, as cast in the traditional "Whereas..." formula, include:

> Whereas, The primary goal of every educational institution should be to improve and add to the intellectual and personal development of each student; and...

Whereas, The measures of quality in most colleges and universities often fail to evaluate the impact of the institution on the improvement of the individual students from entrance to graduation; and

Whereas, The State of California spends nearly five billion dollars annually on its system of higher education, but the budget formulas tend to be based more on enrollments and physical space needs rather than on rewarding institutions for improvement of student learning; and

Whereas, Many colleges and universities across the country are considering experimenting with "value-added"...approaches to measure student growth and with budget formulas which recognize and reward institutional performance in these areas;...

California has not taken the lead in value-added assessment, and for good reason; experience with such assessment is very limited and reliable, widely accepted instruments do not exist. CPEC's final report in response to the ACR 141, Funding Excellence in California Higher Education, showed much sensitivity to how the state could do more harm than good by rushing into performance-based budgeting. The Commission formulated six "guiding principles" to which it thought the state should adhere in developing and establishing any performance-based funding for higher education. The Commission has committed itself to evaluating future policy recommendations regarding performance-based budgeting in light of these principles, which are:

1) State funding incentives to promote quality in California higher education should be funds that are supplementary to the institution's base budget and premised on a cooperative model, where financial incentives are geared toward the aggregate performance of the state's whole systems of higher education.

2) State funding incentives to promote quality improvements in higher education should recognize that value-added assessments are of greatest values when linked with other data about students' educational experience and when used for institutional self-assessment, student counseling, and program evaluation.

3) State funding incentives to promote quality improvement in higher education should establish that outcome measurement must be tied to the multiplicity of missions, goals, and functions

of the different segments and institutions of higher education in California.

4) State policy on assessment and quality improvement in California higher education should establish that the primary objective is to assist faculty and students to improve the teaching-learning process, and that the definition and assessment of student outcomes and competency standards at the course, program, and departmental level is primarily a faculty responsibility and one that should be influenced by student opinion.

5) The state-level assessment and incentive-funding strategy adopted in California to improve the quality of higher education should be developed carefully over time, phased in gradually, and frequently reevaluated in order to ensure effectiveness.

6) The state-level strategy adopted in California to fund and promote excellence in higher education must recognize appropriate assessment is but one characteristic of an effective institution. The state needs to support and promote a number of other institutional activities or practices that not only complement the assessment function but that, in toto, must exist in order to achieve "institutional excellence."

Assembly Bill (AB) 2016

Growing out of the Funding Excellence report, Assemblyman Tom Hayden sponsored Assembly Bill 2016, which the Governor signed in January 1987. AB 2016 requires CPEC to "develop, implement, and oversee a performance funding program which would allocate an unspecified percentage of state funds to public institutions of higher education based upon specified performance criteria." Subsequently, the Commission created a task force and charged it with producing a performance-based funding plan by January 1989. Clearly, the primary thrust of AB 2016 is to try to develop a way to ensure that the state gets maximum bang for its educational buck. Like the Tennessee example, then, the bill's supporters want to foster a closer connection between institutional accountability and effectiveness. This objective increases the significance for the university of CPEC's proposal that

performance-based allocations should not come at the expense of the enrollment-driven base budgets of institutions.

Funding Excellence showed a cautious attitude towards performance-based funding. In that spirit, the AB 2016 CPEC task force is thoroughly exploring the various available precedents and alternatives, especially in regards to value-added assessment. For instance, the University of Tennessee's enthusiasm notwithstanding, the task force is looking closely at the adequacy and cost of available instruments for measuring educational talent development.

Currently, there is no consensus among educators about the best single instrument to use. The most widely used instrument is the ACT COMP. However, at $28 per student for the entire battery, it is very expensive to administer. To illustrate, had UCSD used the ACT COMP to test its incoming freshmen and transfer students in Fall 1987, it would have cost over $75,000--not including staff support for coordination, administration, analysis, and dissemination of the results. Because the ACT COMP requires students to speak and to interact with print and visual media, it is labor intensive. Depending upon graduation rates, if the post-testing of graduating seniors is included in the estimate--which is ultimately the point of using the battery in the first place--the cost increases by about a half to two thirds. Moreover, members of the CPEC task force have expressed the concern that, even if an adequate and cost-effective instrument existed, requiring its widespread use would tend to homogenize higher education over the long run, a result diametrically opposed to the diversity the state has traditionally cultivated among the various segments of postsecondary education.

In the spirit of Funding Excellence, some members of the task force are deeply concerned about the likely results of using a carrot/stick approach to funding higher education, even on the margin. Assuming a) the existence of a valid, reliable, inexpensive instrument that did no violence to an institution's unique character and mission, and b) a finite amount of money to allocate, does it really make sense to reward more "effective" institutions at the expense of less effective institutions? To the extent that resources have an impact on quality, such an approach to resource allocation would only increase the disparity between the more and less effective institutions, rather than raise the quality of education throughout an entire system. Conversely, one wonders about the degree of compliance that the state could reasonably expect if it required expensive and time-consuming efforts at assessment only to increase the flow of resources to the least effective institutions.

Consequently, some members of the task force are suggesting that the state focus its efforts on developing ways to reward practices that enhance the quality of whole systems, or increase cooperation between systems. The pitfall here, of course, is that spreading the rewards among so many institutions would make the ultimate reward for any given institution so small that it wouldn't be worth the effort to participate--especially if the state did not provide additional financial support for the assessment efforts in the first place. The final outcome of this particular legislative thrust is difficult to foresee, but the focus on caution and marginal allocations does not appear particularly threatening to the historical priorities of the university.

ASSESSMENT AND THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

There are several groups working out of the Office of the President and the Academic Senate that are developing the UC system's responses to the various initiatives described above. These include the President's Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Education (chaired by Joseph Watson, UCSD Vice Chancellor-Undergraduate Affairs), and a subcommittee of the Academic Council. Unlike research universities in other states that are actively resisting the assessment movement, UC is participating in it. The success of the Subject A testing and placement program is but one example of how UC faculty have exercised leadership in assessment. In contrast, staff on the budget side of the President's Office are somewhat worried about the resource implications of the present state-level discussions. In all, the university's long history of activity in the area of assessment is apparently acting to temper a sense of urgency or defensiveness in response to the present flurry of interest--at least among the faculty involved with the issue.

Everyone agrees at least that citizens and legislators alike are calling for higher education to demonstrate its impact more decisively, although the assessment movement per se does not appear to be generating as much enthusiasm in California as elsewhere. Consequently, for some in the university, this call merely represents a need for the university to communicate more effectively about what it is already doing rather than a need to actually institute whole new assessment mechanisms, let alone actually changing the way it fulfills its missions. Others aren't so sure that the university's response to the assessment movement is fundamentally only a public relations issue. Regardless of the view taken about the kind of response the

situation requires, best guesses are that the university is most likely to see the state at least prescribe some sort of statewide mathematics screening and placement assessment program, along the lines of Subject A, as well as a system for assessing outcomes. Those contacted in the President's Office during the course of preparing this report generally consider the prospect of profound changes in UC resulting from the assessment of classroom instruction and the establishment of performance-based budgeting as fairly unlikely and certainly less pressing than other issues facing the university.

ASSESSMENT AT UCSD

Like the UC system as a whole, assessment, broadly construed, has played a key role in UCSD's institutional life since the campus opened, and its scope has broadened over the years. Consequently, in addition to the assessment processes traditionally associated with coursework, such as tests, papers, presentations, and the like, the campus:

- reviews and evaluates all undergraduate and graduate programs on a 5 to 7 year cycle;
    * Reviewers of undergraduate programs are from UCSD but outside the department or program being studied.
    * Graduate programs undergo rigorous reviews by panels comprising faculty in the discipline, but outside UCSD.
    * Both undergraduate and graduate departmental and program reviews make regular and extensive use of information gleaned from student and faculty surveys and interviews conducted expressly for the reviews.
- surveys students in every class about course content and instructor performance;
    * Although is has its limits, information gleaned from the course and professor evaluations (CAPE) is fed into the tenure and promotion process.

- closely monitors ethnic diversity, as well as retention and graduation rates;

- annually surveys its graduating seniors about their opinion of the preparation they received at UCSD in a number of skill categories, and their early professional or graduate school experience;

  * The Alumni Association is preparing to do an extensive survey of a sample of all of UCSD's graduates sometime in the near future.

  * Beginning in the 1987-88 academic year, the campus will regularly assess the perceptions and experiences of continuing students on a triennial basis using the College Student Experiences Questionnaire.

    o This survey covers frequency of contact with faculty, hours devoted to academic work and employment, use of campus resources, and other matters related to the college experiences of students.

- uses placement tests in mathematics, foreign language, writing, and other subjects to inform the advising process for all new students;

- participates every third year in the American Council on Education/Cooperative Institutional Research Program (ACE/CIRP) freshman survey;

  * This survey yields information about the background, abilities, aspirations, values, attitudes, and activity patterns of incoming students.

  * The other seven general campuses are also beginning to participate on a regular basis.

  * The campus contemplates conducting detailed follow-up surveys of graduating seniors in the years to come.

- closely monitors the progress of all of its affirmative and special action students;

- conducts exit interviews with those students leaving UCSD who come to the attention of the college Deans;

- monitors the performance of its graduate students on professional school entrance examinations, such as the LSAT, MCAT, GMAT, and GRE;

- regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its outreach and student services programs.

Although extensive, this list does not currently include those kinds of assessment that the legislation arising out of the Master Plan review and the CPEC's AB 2016 task force may mandate: namely, objective peer review of classroom instruction and value-added testing programs. Neither does the list include comprehensive departmental examinations, or the kind of system-wide "rising junior" basic skill exams that are becoming popular in other states. Given the cost and complexity of such approaches to assessment, there is little incentive for the campus to institute them unilaterally, especially as long as UCSD continues to attract greater numbers of better-prepared students.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After several years of not only sustained but growing interest, the assessment movement obviously is not merely another passing fad. Exactly what directions this movement will take in California that might impinge on UCSD are not yet clear, but some sort of legislation is likely. The greatest danger to academic freedom and the university's autonomy and research mission would result from the state emphasizing institutional accountability more than institutional improvement, and mandating the use of crude, standardized assessment instruments; and the state thus far is carefully avoiding extreme measures. It seems most likely that the state will establish some sort of screening and placement scheme for mathematics along the lines of Subject A, as well as the regular systematic assessment of outcomes. Neither development would really alter the mission or structure of the university. The legislature may also try to require that the university objectively evaluate, demonstrably improve, and increasingly reward the teaching performance of faculty, but it is not clear that

support for instituting a fundamental change in the university is widespread or cohesive. Because of its cautiously pragmatic approach, and its focus on supplemental rather than base allocations, even the relatively radical proposal to develop and implement a performance-based funding plan for public higher education will probably not result in a process that substantially affects the character of the university.

The university on all levels is already trying to steer discussions and policy-formation in directions that will preserve the university's preeminence in research while still encouraging improvement in undergraduate education. However, it may be in the university's best interests to take even more initiative; the experience of higher education in other states shows that actually leading the assessment movement can help prevent an institution or system from being overwhelmed by it (e.g., the University of Tennessee). Intensifying the university's faculty and administrative activity in this area could provide a means to prevent the university from ending up on the defensive and subject to policies and procedures that would be inconvenient at best, and could erode its autonomy and reputation at worst. Such an intensification might take the form of more aggressive advocacy of outcomes assessment or, more provocatively, actively engaging in a thorough public discussion of the philosophical and perceptual issues that underlie the assessment movement. However, given a) the ability of large complex organizations to weather changes in their environments, b) the difficulty legislatures can have in generating and promulgating laws that have a direct and substantive impact on complex issues and institutions, and c) the tendency for enthusiasm about anything to wane over time, one could also argue, in the spirit of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," for the maintenance of

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the status quo. Indeed, if the university's experience with lower division undergraduate education is an example, then paying increased attention to assessment could actually fuel rather than dampen the enthusiasm of assessment's legislative advocates.

UCSD has in place a fairly extensive assessment program. However, the campus might be better able to enhance undergraduate education while preserving its research mission by anticipating the most likely state mandates regarding assessment. Specifically, the campus could start even now to build a more integrated "assessment infrastructure" and begin making the evaluation of instruction somewhat more objective and systematic. For example, UCSD might consider forming a student/faculty/staff committee to work closely with the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and/or the Vice Chancellor of Undergraduate Affairs to facilitate making better use of the information UCSD already gathers about incoming students and educational outcomes. At best, such efforts would put UCSD in a stronger position to maintain its prerogatives regarding how best to fulfill its teaching and research missions. At worst, the campus would generate information that faculty and student affairs personnel could put to constructive use in curriculum refinement, program development, and academic advising. While a strategy of maintaining the status quo has much to commend it, such an approach runs the risk, however slight, of leaving the campus unprepared to respond with maximum effectiveness to changes in public perception and the legislative environment. In sum, even though there appears no cause for alarm regarding the potential impact of the assessment movement on UCSD, there is enough cause for concern to warrant consideration of preparing the campus to respond to prospective state initiatives stemming from the movement.

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